DISCUSSION PAPER

ON
THE ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM AT THE WORKERS COMPENSATION BOARD

Executive Summary

August, 1989

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PREFACE

Manitoba's Workers Compensation Act, passed in 1916, provides compensation benefits to workers employed by industries that are covered under the Act, and whom, as a result of their employment, are injured or contract an industrial disease. The Workers Compensation Board was created in 1917 and since then has been responsible for the administration of the Act.

The Act also allows the WCB to provide vocational rehabilitation services to injured workers who, due to their compensable condition, are unable to resume their pre-accident employment without assistance. These services ultimately benefit workers, employers, and the compensation system of Manitoba.

Between September, 1988 and April, 1989, the WCB underwent an extensive structural reorganization designed to improve service to injured workers and employers in Manitoba. It was during this time that the Benefits Division decided that:

1. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program needed to be clearly defined.
2. Direction for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program needed to be established.
3. This definition and direction needed to be communicated to the stakeholders (ie., employers, workers, medical community, government, etc.).

It is with this intent that this paper has been produced by the Workers Compensation Board.

INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this paper is to provide a clear understanding of the goal and objectives of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program and to generate awareness in terms of what workers, employers, and other concerned parties can expect when involved with the program.

This paper serves additional purposes.

1. It represents a framework from which policy and procedures will be established.
2. It details the guiding principles of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.
3. It provides for accountability within the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.
4. It describes current realities and sets goals for the future.
5. It communicates the individual responsibilities of workers, employers, vocational rehabilitation practitioners, and other involved parties.
6. It provides guidance to the vocational rehabilitation practitioners.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION — THE DISCIPLINE

Vocational rehabilitation is the process of providing restorative and rehabilitative services to disabled individuals so that they may achieve maximum vocational potential. It's a goal oriented process which involves a sequence of services uniquely designed to help disabled people pursue their optimum vocational adjustment.

The vocational rehabilitation process is comprised of the assessment, plan development, and implementation phases.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND THE WORKERS COMPENSATION BOARD

MISSION STATEMENT

TO ASSIST THE WORKER ACHIEVE GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT, PRIMARILY IN THE MANITOBA MARKET PLACE, BY OFFERING SERVICES WHICH FIRSTLY PROVIDE FOR EMPLOYABILITY AND SECONDLY FACILITATE EMPLOYMENT.

GOAL

TO PROVIDE FOR AN EARLY RETURN TO EMPLOYMENT WHICH TAKES INTO CONSIDERATION THE WORKER'S PRE-ACCIDENT STATUS AND POST-ACCIDENT CAPABILITIES, APTITUDES, AND INTERESTS. THIS SHOULD BE PURSUED IN A FAIR, TIMELY, AND COST-EFFECTIVE MANNER.

GOVERNING LEGISLATION

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program essentially operates under Sections 27(15) and 27(20) of the Workers Compensation Act. The Workers Compensation Board has chosen to use its discretion and provide a Vocational Rehabilitation Program to assist workers.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Adequate vocational rehabilitation benefits all stakeholders and as such, vocational rehabilitation services should be made available in a progressive compensation system where the focus is on rehabilitation not compensation. The guiding principles of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program are detailed in the paper.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Workers Compensation Board employs vocational rehabilitation practioners who have specialized skills related to several different disciplines. These are the Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant, Employment Specialist and Rehabilitation Nurse. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program requires assistance/participation on the part of other key players (ie., unions, employers, and healthcare community).

It is the role of the vocational rehabilitation practitioner to bring together all of the parties who share a stake in the vocational rehabilitation process and facilitate optimum vocational rehabilitation.

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION

The Workers Compensation Board has integrated service delivery units where all disciplines (ie., adjudication, vocational rehabilitation and healthcare) work together for effective case management. It is through this inter-disciplinary collaboration that individualized strategies are developed and implemented. It is also here that the belief germinates that the worker and employer must actively participate in a team-oriented process of vocational rehabilitation.

In the integrated approach, all team members must recognize that the group is working toward a common goal of optimal rehabilitation on the part of the worker. It is necessary to focus collaboration on this goal and not the objectives of the various disciplines (B. Forman, J. MacDonald, 1989). As such, each team member must act in a manner which is consistent with the mission statement and guiding principles adopted for the Workers Compensation Board's Vocational Rehabilitation Program. This emphasizes the purpose of intervention. Also, the multi-disciplinary team should function in accordance with elements which are key to the successful application of the integrated approach.

During the vocational rehabilitation process, the injured worker may interact with different members of the multi-disciplinary team to varying degree. The multi-disciplinary team is jointly working for the benefit of the injured worker and employer.

TIMELY INTERVENTION

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program is committed to the development of a timely intervention strategy which is pro-active and positively impacts on case management.

Timely intervention should be based in a multi-disciplinary setting where medical, social, and vocational assessment occurs. Cases are referred for timely intervention when the injury appears to be of a serious nature, may result in prolonged disability, or a return to work in the pre-accident position may be a problem. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program should establish screening procedures which identify whether a comprehensive assessment is required or medical, social, or vocational intervention is warranted. It is crucial for the Workers Compensation Board to adopt a strategy which will assist in the identification of cases which require assessment and/or intervention in a timely manner.

It is hoped that the benefits of this timely intervention strategy, founded in a multi-disciplinary approach, will be accepted by workers, employers, and the medical community. All involved parties need to recognize that prolonged time loss and significant disability does not necessarily have to follow a work related injury and that

it is possible to develop and implement a program which provides timely medical and vocational rehabilitation.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Once a claim has been approved through adjudication, it can be referred to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program for assessment and/or intervention.

Most commonly, claims are directed to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program when the worker's functional capabilities may be impaired as a direct consequence of the compensable condition. In this case, it is the responsibility of the vocational rehabilitation practitioner to make a recommendation regarding whether the worker is unable to return to the regular employment. Claims can also be referred to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program on the basis of the established guidelines. (It is the responsibility of the vocational rehabilitation practitioner to assess each individual claim and make a recommendation concerning whether intervention is required and if so, establish the anticipated nature and extent of intervention. The vocational rehabilitation practitioner will act as co-ordinator of the multi-disciplinary team for the purpose of assessment).

HIERARCHY OF OBJECTIVES (PLAN PRIORITIES)

When a claim is assigned to a vocational rehabilitation practitioner for assessment and intervention, there are certain vocational options which need to be exhausted in a sequential manner. These plan priorities have been established as follows:

1. Return to the same work with the same employer.
2. Return to the same work (modified) with the same employer.
3. Return to different work with the same employer.
4. Return to similar work with a different employer.
5. Return to different work with a different employer.
6. Re-education and training.

Essentially, it is the goal of the vocational rehabilitation practitioner to offer services to the worker and employer which provide the opportunity for employability or employment and exhaust the least possible number of plan priorities.

INDIVIDUALIZED WRITTEN REHABILITATION PLANS

It is crucial that the worker and the vocational rehabilitation practitioner develop a plan of action in order to benefit from the vocational rehabilitation process. The Workers Compensation Board considers it critical that there be development of an Individualized Written Rehabilitation Plan for each case where intervention is required.

The Individualized Written Rehabilitation Plan (IWRP) is the document which outlines the specific vocational plan developed and agreed to by the vocational rehabilitation practitioner and the worker. The IWRP describes the specific objectives and goal to be pursued by the worker and the vocational rehabilitation practitioner. Further, the IWRP details the activities which will be undertaken to achieve the objectives and ultimate vocational goal.

It is of paramount importance that the worker and vocational rehabilitation practitioner, to the greatest extent possible, mutually agree to the plan and accept responsibility for its success.

BENEFITS AND ALLOWANCES

In association with the provision of services under the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, the Workers Compensation Board will ensure that workers are provided with adequate income maintenance and allowances to allow for successful completion of a vocational rehabilitation plan.

The Benefits Administration Branch of the Workers Compensation Board is responsible for maintaining benefits during the course of a vocational rehabilitation program. Vocational rehabilitation benefits can be equivalent to those received by the injured worker during temporary total disability or compensate for temporary or permanent loss in earning capacity.

When vocational rehabilitation benefits are being provided, Benefits Administration will consider monies being received by the worker through other disability programs by reason of the compensable injury. It is considered that vocational rehabilitation benefits should augment employment and/or other monies being received by the worker as a consequence of the compensable injury or condition.

Under the multi-disciplinary team approach, the adjudicator will be responsible for administering all benefits. Vocational rehabilitation practitioners will focus on providing vocational rehabilitation services.

DISCONTINUATION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

Vocational rehabilitation services can be declined, reduced, or discontinued within established guidelines.

In deciding whether and when to discontinue or reduce benefits and services, Benefits Administration must carefully consider the individual circumstances of each case. It is the responsibility of Benefits Administration to determine whether benefits and services should be a) discontinued or b) reduced, based on the level of employability expected upon completion of the vocational rehabilitation plan.

It is generally agreed that the conclusion of vocational rehabilitation services is a part of the vocational rehabilitation process. Where successful, vocational rehabilitation provides the worker with the opportunity for a return to his/her pre-accident status and independence from the Workers Compensation Board.

DISPUTES AND APPEALS

While the Vocational Rehabilitation Program is founded on the belief that vocational goals should be mutually established and agreed to, it is recognized that, on occasion, the worker will disagree with a decision, determination, or request on the part of the vocational rehabilitation practitioner.

Where the worker does not agree with an action taken by the vocational rehabilitation practitioner in whole or in part, the worker may pursue his/her position or contention through the Workers Compensation Board's appeal process.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program at the Workers Compensation Board offers specific programs and services to assist in the results during assessment, plan development, and implementation.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program at the Workers Compensation Board has established several programs, all of which are comprised of specific services accessed either internally or externally. These are the

1) adjustment program,
2) assessment program,
3) employment program,
4) re-education, vocational, and academic training program, and
5) independent living program.

CONCLUSION

It is the mandate and responsibility of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program to provide the opportunity for reintegration of the worker while being accountable to all parties who have stake in the compensation system. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program is obligated to ensure that the appropriate and cost-effective services are made available to all parties who are involved with the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

The Workers Compensation Board is committed to the development of policies and procedures which are consistent with the role and functions of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program as stated in this document.

The Workers Compensation Board, through reorganization, has established service delivery units in which vocational rehabilitation can be pursued by multi-disciplinary teams. This will enable healthcare, vocational, and administrative support staff to develop strategies with the worker and employer which effectively address all aspects of rehabilitation. The Workers Compensation Board will ensure that vocational rehabilitation practitioners have adequate authority to expend compensation monies required during the vocational rehabilitation process. Further, there will be reasonable quality assurance and development of innovative techniques and programs in support of the vocational rehabilitation functions within the Benefits Administration.

Through adherence to the principles and guidelines presented in this paper, evaluation of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program should demonstrate that it is viable and can be administered in an efficient and effective manner. It is this goal towards which the Vocational Rehabilitation Program must strive. To this end, this paper provides for understanding and awareness of the role and functions of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program so that all stakeholders can commit to the advancement of the program.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

AT THE WORKERS COMPENSATION BOARD OF MANITOBA

Returning to Work. A Team Effort

WCB
Workers Compensation
Board of Manitoba

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Finally, the Workers Compensation Board would like to acknowledge the dedicated efforts of support staff who assisted in the creation of this document.

PREFACE

The Manitoba's Workers Compensation Act provides compensation benefits to workers employed by industries that are covered under the Act, and whom, as a result of their employment, are injured or contract an occupational disease. The Workers Compensation Board is responsible for the administration of the Act.

The Act also allows the W.C.B. to provide vocational rehabilitation services to injured workers who, due to their compensable condition, are unable to resume their pre-injury employment without assistance. These services ultimately benefit Manitoba workers and employers. Between September, 1988 and April, 1989, the W.C.B. underwent an extensive reorganization to improve service to injured workers and employers in Manitoba. During this time the Benefits Division decided that:

1. The vocational rehabilitation process needed to be clearly defined.
2. Direction for the vocational rehabilitation process needed to be established.
3. This definition and direction needed to be communicated externally to the stakeholders (ie., employers, workers, healthcare community, government, etc.) and internally among all staff.

It is with this intent that this paper has been produced by the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba.

Introduction

The main purpose of this paper is to provide a clear understanding of the goal and objectives of the vocational rehabilitation function and to identify the services and supports available through the program.

This paper serves additional purposes.

1. It represents the framework from which policy and procedures will be established.
2. It details the guiding principles for the vocational rehabilitation process.
3. It provides for accountability within the vocational rehabilitation process.
4. It describes current realities and defines program goals for the future.
5. It communicates the individual responsibilities of workers, employers, vocational rehabilitation professionals, and other involved parties.
6. It provides guidance to the vocational rehabilitation professionals.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION — THE DISCIPLINE

PREAMBLE

Vocational rehabilitation (VR) can be defined as the process of providing restorative and rehabilitative services to disabled individuals in order to enable them to achieve maximum vocational potential. It's a goal-oriented process which involves a sequence of services uniquely designed to help disabled people pursue their optimum vocational adjustment (Bitter, 1979).

The vocational rehabilitation process is made up of four major phases:

1) assessment
2) plan development
3) implementation
4) evaluation

THE ASSESSMENT PHASE

This is the phase where information about the disabled individual is gathered so that the person's needs can be identified and appropriate re-employment and/or training decisions can be made (Griswold and Corthell, 1987). During this phase, the extent of intervention/assistance is determined and potential strategies are developed.

Vocational assessment also serves to determine whether an individual is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services available through the service provider.

The assessment phase establishes strengths and weaknesses related to re-employment and gathers information crucial to the development of the VR plan.

The factors which need to be considered during vocational assessment are detailed in Figure 1. Adequate appraisal of the individual will result in a clear client profile. This is necessary to ensure that an appropriate vocational plan is developed.

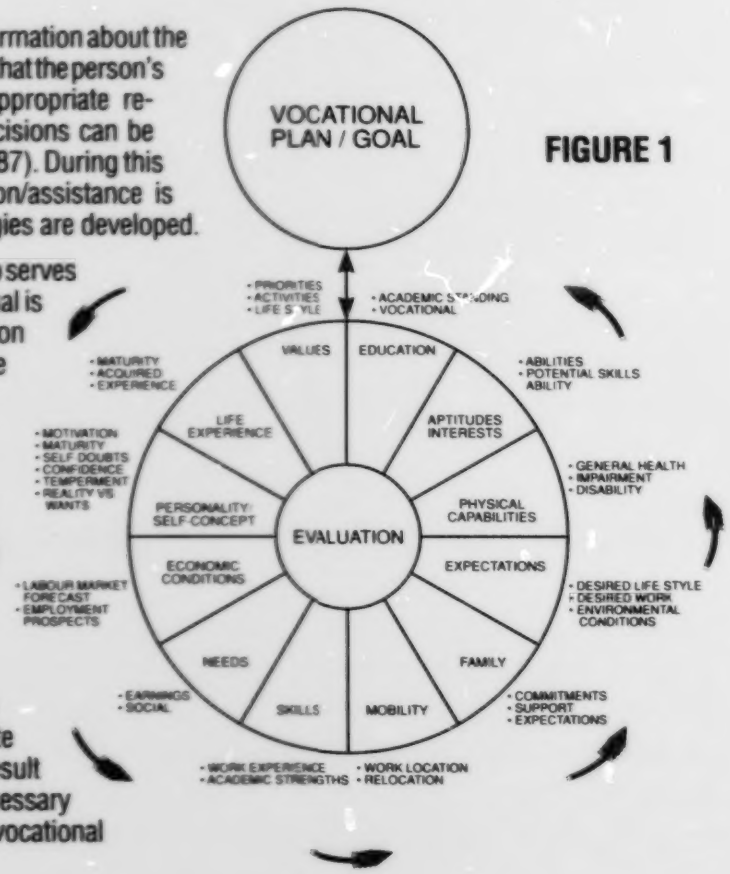


FIGURE 1

PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Once an adequate profile of the individual has been developed, the planning process can begin.

A vocational plan describes the client's goal and outlines how it is to be achieved. In order to do this, the VR professional and the client need to analyze the client profile (ie., interests, aptitudes, skills, physical capacities, education, etc.) and generate potential vocational options and ultimately a vocational goal.

When prospective vocational goals are expressed, it is necessary to determine whether these goals are appropriate. This involves a comparison between the information detailed in the client profile and the demands of the occupational group related to the vocational goal. This allows for a realistic goal.

At the point that a vocational goal is determined to be attainable based on all available information, an individualized written Rehabilitation Plan should be developed.

It is critical that the client participate in all steps of the planning stage. Vocational rehabilitation programs exist only because of the client, therefore it is logical that he/she must be an integral part of the planning process (Esser, 1977). The client and the VR professional share responsibility for the development and outcome of the plan.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation should naturally flow from the established vocational plan. During this phase, internal and external supports and services are provided to the client and the VR professional must be aware of and have access to all the necessary resources. This knowledge must be extensive as each client has unique needs.

The VR professional and the client should maintain regular contact throughout this phase so that the plan may proceed as anticipated. Unforeseen obstacles and barriers are identified during the implementation phase and plans of resolution are developed.

A vocational plan is executed so that the disabled individual can return to employment or acquire skills which allow him/her to be competitive in the market place. The success of this execution depends mainly on how well the assessment and plan development phases were developed.

EVALUATION

The vocational rehabilitation process includes evaluation of the plan or program. While evaluation occurs throughout the vocational rehabilitation process to facilitate required adjustments, the overall results of intervention must be measured. Evaluation allows the VR professional to analyze the effectiveness of the program/plan for the future and accordingly modify activities.

Evaluation includes the analysis of factors such as stakeholder satisfaction, consistency with the client profile, improvement in general functioning, extent of independence, acquisition of skills, employment status, employment retention, and the overall retainment of benefits resulting from the program or plan.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND THE WORKERS COMPENSATION BOARD

MISSION STATEMENT

To assist the worker to achieve sustainable post-injury employment by offering services which provide for appropiate employability and to supplement that employability with reasonable employment search assistance.

GOAL

To provide for an early return to employment which takes into consideration the worker's pre-accident status and post-accident capabilities, aptitudes, and interests. This should be pursued in a fair, timely, and cost-effective manner.

ENABLING CONDITIONS

These are the areas in which it is critical to achieve acceptable results.

1. Worker acceptance of responsibility for his/her own rehabilitation.
2. Employer acceptance of responsibility for rehabilitation of the worker.
3. Active participation and co-operation of all parties involved in the vocational rehabilitation process, including the injured worker, the employer, labour and industry, and healthcare professionals, as well as the vocational rehabilitation professional.
4. Workers Compensation Board accountability for effective and economical service delivery.
5. Labour and Industry active support of re-employment of disabled workers.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

These are the methods or means by which the mission statement can be attained.

1. Policies and procedures consistent with the Mission Statement.
2. A communications strategy which facilitates consultation with and dissemination of information to all stakeholders.
3. A common understanding, both internal and external, of the vocational rehabilitation process within the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba.
4. A timely intervention strategy.
5. Qualified vocational rehabilitation professionals.

6. Clear written vocational rehabilitation plans developed in conjunction with the worker and employer.
7. Sufficient quality vocational and employment programs and services (internal and external).

GOVERNING LEGISLATION

Vocational rehabilitation services at the Workers Compensation Board are provided under two sections of the Workers Compensation Act.

27(15)

> The Board may provide for any worker, whose earning capacity in his previous occupation has been permanently impaired by the injury, such vocational training as may be deemed advisable for the purpose of preparing the injured worker for another occupation to which he may seem adapted and which is likely to increase his future earning capacity; and to that end the Board may contract with an institution or institutions furnishing such vocational training, and may adopt rules and regulations for that purpose and for the payment of the training.

27(20)

> To aid in getting injured workers back to work and to assist in reducing or removing any handicap resulting from their injuries, the Board may take such measures and make such expenditures from the accident fund as it deems necessary or expedient.

While a worker is entitled under the legislation to compensation benefits for various reasons (ie., temporary and total disability, permanent partial disability, etc.) due to a compensable injury or condition, the provision of vocational rehabilitation benefits and services is purely at the discretion of the Workers Compensation Board and based on the merits of each case. The Workers Compensation Board has chosen to provide vocational rehabilitation services to assist workers in achieving reintegration.

The Manitoba compensation system relies on employers and unions to accept responsibility to co-operatively work with the Workers Compensation Board and to re-employ injured workers.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1) Each worker is unique and the vocational rehabilitation professional needs to be sensitive to the particular needs of the individual.
2) The worker is key to his/her own rehabilitation and must be actively involved in the planning and pursuit of the vocational goal.
3) The worker must understand the vocational rehabilitation process and be committed to it.

4) An effective relationship which includes mutual trust must be established and maintained between the vocational rehabilitation professional and the worker.

5) The rehabilitation process should focus on the worker's capabilities and not his/her limitations.

6) Effective case management requires a multi-disciplinary approach.

7) Accountability must be maintained by all parties involved in rehabilitation.

8) The individual's right to confidentiality must be respected.

9) There must be fair and impartial delivery of services to all.

10) The services must continue to improve consistent with progressive advancements made in society in programming for disabled individuals.

11) A focus on rehabilitation and not merely monetary compensation is of benefit to all.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Vocational rehabilitation services available through the Workers Compensation Board are administered within the Benefits Division. Figure 2 outlines the structure of the Benefits Division. The Case Management Branch performs functions related to vocational rehabilitation.

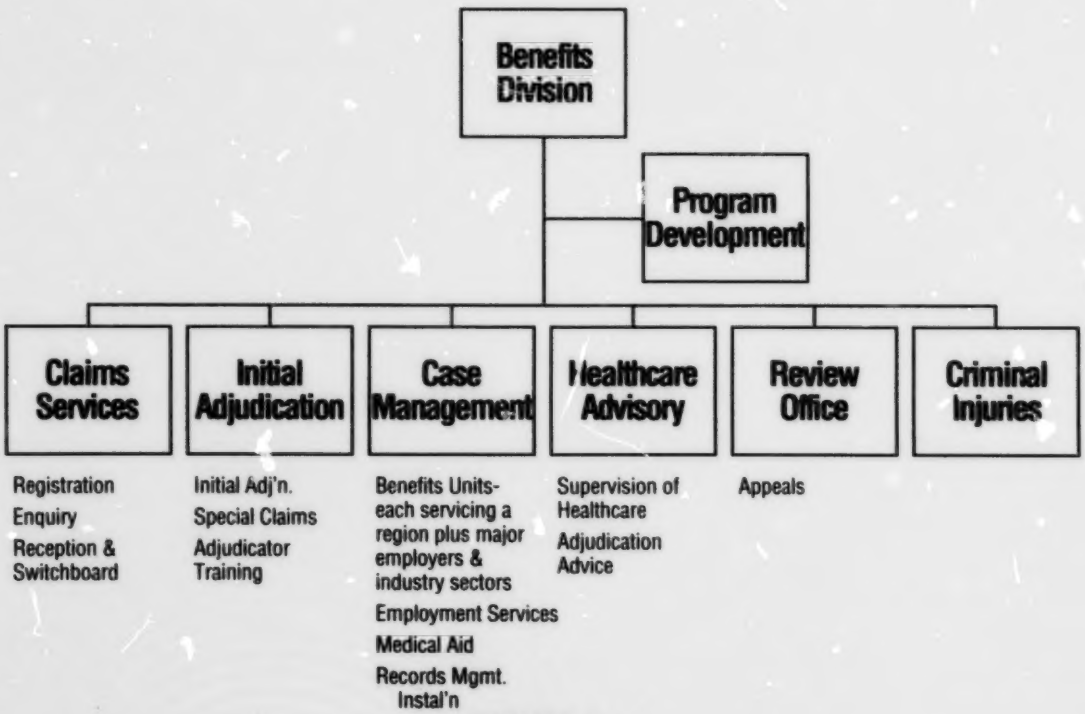


FIGURE 2

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROFESSIONAL

Research into the role and functions of the vocational rehabilitation professional suggests that they play a multi-faceted role (Rubin & Roessler, 1983). The VR professional acts as a facilitator, co-ordinator, planner, guide, educator and counsellor.

The VR professional acts as a catalyst providing for successful vocational rehabilitation to take place. The VR professional promotes a team approach to resolve the various difficulties experienced by the worker during recovery and rehabilitation. The VR professional recognizes needs and sensitively provides services based on the individual needs of the worker. The VR professional assists the worker by providing support services and promoting the worker's skills and abilities.

The Workers Compensation Board employs vocational rehabilitation professionals who have specialized skills related to several different disciplines.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CONSULTANT

The Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant is responsible for expediting and/or facilitating worker's return to employment by assessing employment barriers and implementing required and appropriate vocational programs.

Major responsibilities of the Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant include:

1. Counsel workers to develop achievable vocational rehabilitation goals. The Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant may facilitate vocational evaluations and access other tools and techniques as are appropriate to the worker's circumstances.
2. Document the rehabilitation program expectations of both involved parties and ensure the plan is clearly understood.
3. Monitor programs to assist the worker and the employer in identifying and addressing any problems that may arise.
4. Refer workers for relevant services including Employment Services at the WCB where appropriate.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant must possess well-developed skills in relation to vocational counselling, the development of vocational plans, and the coordination of activities during the vocational rehabilitation process.

THE EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST

The Employment Specialist helps expedite a return to optimal employment for the worker. The Employment Specialist maintains employer/industry contacts for the purpose of developing and maintaining a prospective employer inventory (ie., job bank) for potential employment of workers.

Major responsibilities of the Employment Specialist include:

1. Meet with the worker and Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant to establish an appropriate goal consistent with factors which may be barriers to employment.
2. Provide guidance in basic job search techniques, resume writing, job interview skills, and the development of employment directions. The Employment Specialist supports the skills provided through the Job Finding Club and works closely with the Job Finding Club in offering specific employment preparation services.
3. Meet with employers to facilitate or arrange opportunities for employment, training on-the-job, work experiences, etc.
4. Monitor placements to assist the worker and the employer in identifying and addressing any problems that may arise.

The Employment Specialist must possess well-developed negotiation and marketing skills, and the ability to do local labour market analysis.

JOB FINDING CLUB INSTRUCTOR

The Job Finding Club Instructor is responsible for designing, delivering, and evaluating instruction for the client in the following: 1) effective job seeking skills, 2) providing supportive counselling services to workers seeking employment, 3) providing a resume preparation service for workers, 4) identifying other employment preparation needs of workers, and 5) developing educational components to meet those needs. The Job Finding Club Instructor must possess well-developed skills in relation to group dynamics and training methods.

KEY PLAYERS IN THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROCESS

Successful rehabilitation depends on the assistance and participation of other key parties.

Employers who participate in vocational rehabilitation will reap economic benefits and maintain employee/employer relationships which have been developed through the efforts of both parties. The employer has invested in the worker and the worker has worked to aid his/her employer. As such, employers should accept responsibility for their injured workers to the greatest extent possible. As good corporate citizens, employers should broadly participate in and promote programs for the hiring of disabled workers. It is critical that vocational rehabilitation professionals enlist the support of employers as it is the employment opportunities within the workplaces which are targeted by vocational rehabilitation professionals and workers.

Unions and associations should assist in the vocational rehabilitation of their individual members. Unions and worker associations should aid workers in returning to employment on a case-by-case basis. Unions and worker associations should actively promote rehabilitation and advance the view that extensive disability need not follow an injury.

The healthcare community also plays a significant role in the vocational rehabilitation process. The healthcare community provides the information necessary to ensure that vocational rehabilitation proceeds in accordance with the worker's physical and psychological level of functioning. Healthcare practitioners should encourage the worker and facilitate timely intervention for their patients by promoting rehabilitation and an early return to employment. Thus, the healthcare practitioner can reduce the difficulties which are experienced by workers when their worklife is significantly disrupted.

It is the responsibility of all parties, given a relatively stable Manitoba labour force, to ensure that injuries are not retiring a part of the productive work force on an ongoing basis.

It is the role of the vocational rehabilitation professional to bring together all of the parties who share a stake in the re-employment of an injured worker and facilitate optimum vocational rehabilitation.

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION

The Workers Compensation Board has integrated benefit and service delivery units where all disciplines (ie., adjudication, payment, medical aid, vocational rehabilitation and healthcare) work together for effective case management. It is through this inter-disciplinary collaboration that individualized strategies are developed and implemented. It is also important that the worker and employer actively participate in a team-oriented process of vocational rehabilitation.

In the integrated approach, all team members must recognize that the group is working toward a common goal of optimal rehabilitation on the part of the worker. It is necessary to focus collaboration on this goal and not the individual objectives of the various disciplines (B. Forman, J. MacDonald, 1989). As such, each team member must understand and act in a manner consistent with the mission statement and guiding principles adopted in this paper. This emphasizes the purpose of intervention. The multi-disciplinary team should function in accordance with elements which are key to the successful application of the integrated approach. These are:

1. ***Role of the Worker and Employer and Their Representatives:*** the worker and employer will actively participate in all phases of the vocational rehabilitation process. It is essential that these parties be actively involved in plan development, intervention and evaluation.
2. ***Goal Setting:*** the multi-disciplinary team will clearly define specific goals through input and/or agreement by all members of the team.
3. ***Decision Making:*** there will be a clear understanding of individual responsibilities for decisions. The team environment will allow for consensus regarding any specific decision beforehand. The adjudicator will be the administrator who accesses rehabilitation services as required.
4. ***Objectives of Team Meetings:*** multi-disciplinary team discussions should occur for the purpose of mutual problem solving and setting and monitoring of goals.

It is the basic purpose of inter-disciplinary collaboration to foster exploration and development of objectives and goals. Each discipline can provide the specialized services required to allow for attainment of the established goal.

At the Workers Compensation Board, the multi-disciplinary team is comprised of an Adjudicator, Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant and Employment Specialist, and Healthcare resources both internal and external.

1. ***Adjudicator:*** Retains case management responsibility related to compensation benefits. Identifies the potential need for and accesses vocational rehabilitation services for the injured worker.
2. ***Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant:*** Identifies potential for employment and prepares the injured worker for employability.

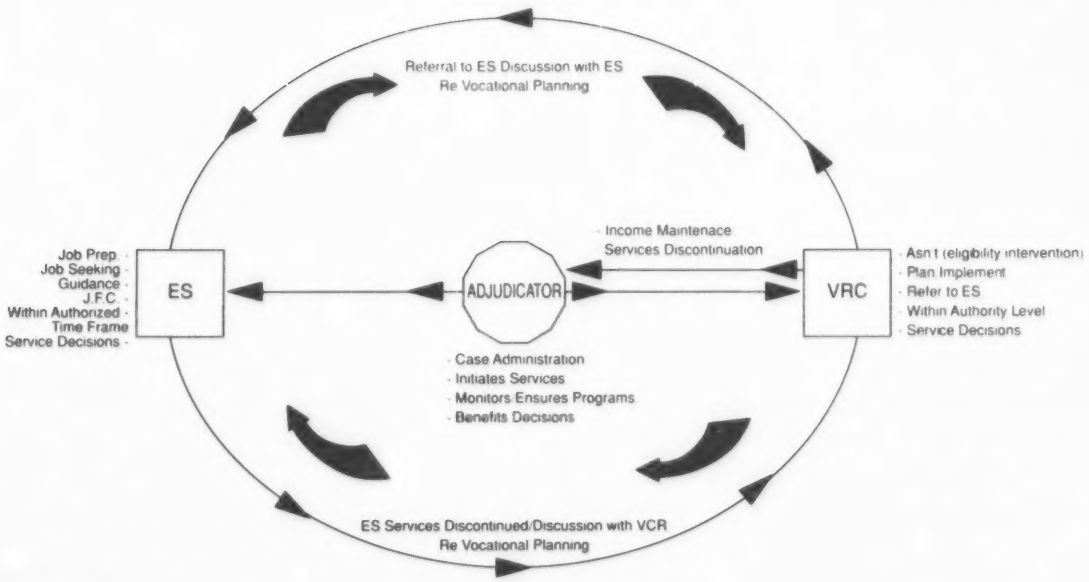
3. ***Employment Specialist:*** assists the injured worker in locating a suitable employment opportunity.

This team will access external services/resources as required.

During the vocational rehabilitation process, the injured worker may interact with different members of the multi-disciplinary team to varying degree. The multi-disciplinary team is jointly working for the benefit of the injured worker and employer.

The roles and responsibilities relative to case management are outlined in figure 3.

CASE MANAGEMENT — ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES



VR Services (including ES) are part of the overall case mgt. process.
* Arrows reflect discussion/Interaction between the case management team as required

FIGURE 3

TIMELY INTERVENTION

The Workers Compensation Board is committed to the development of a timely intervention strategy which is pro-active and positively impacts on case management.

Historically, it has been advocated that early involvement and timely intervention are the keys to effective and efficient case management. It has also been stated that early involvement (ie., assessment):

1) is not significantly more costly than standard case management practices;
2) reduces the extent of time loss;
3) brings to light factors indicative of prolonged disability so that they can be addressed in a timely fashion;
4) reduces permanent impairment; and,
5) limits the development of psychological factors which can impact on the extent of disability. Timely intervention aims to provide for optimum and expedient recovery and to facilitate the earliest possible return to work. Successfully implemented, a timely intervention strategy benefits the worker, employer, and the compensation system.

In line with the position that timely intervention is required, the Workers Compensation Board developed a strategy which was initiated as a pilot project in 1990. The "BACK IN ACTION" project is intended to reduce claim severity by 1.) promoting an early return to pre-injury employment, or modified work duties, 2.) developing a referral process whereby workers are given necessary attention, 3.) ensuring that workers likely to require more extensive medical or vocational rehabilitation are referred for services at the earliest time, 4.) utilizing a multi-disciplinary approach which accesses all required internal and external resources, 5.) emphasizing worker input and participation in the recovery process, and 6.) integrating the timely intervention strategy into the claims management process. Other initiatives underway at the Workers Compensation Board which will enhance timely intervention include:

1) comprehensive reporting formats for the healthcare community
2) support of workplace-based rehabilitation programs.

The benefits of this timely intervention strategy, founded in a multi-disciplinary approach, should be accepted by workers, employers, and the healthcare community. All involved parties need to recognize that prolonged time loss and significant disability does not necessarily have to follow a work- related injury and that it is possible to develop and implement a program which provides timely medical and vocational rehabilitation.

REFERRAL CRITERIA

Any claim which has been approved through adjudication can be referred for vocational assessment and/or intervention if a need for such services is identified.

Most commonly, claims are directed for vocational rehabilitation services where the worker's functional capabilities may be impaired as a direct consequence of the compensable condition. In this case, it is the responsibility of the vocational rehabilitation professional to make a recommendation regarding whether the worker is unable to return to the regular employment. Claims will also be reviewed for prospective vocational rehabilitation services on the basis of the following criteria:

1. The injury/condition is of a serious nature.
    i. Significant amputation.
    ii. Brain or brain stem injury.
    iii. Significant crush injury.
    iv. Paraplegia.
    v. Quadriplegia.
    vi. Significant burns.
2. An extensive period of convalescence is anticipated.
3. The time loss from work exceeds that normally anticipated for the type of injury or condition (based on disability duration norms).
4. The compensable injury is expected to result in a degree of permanent impairment.
5. A return to the regular employment may be problematic as a result of the compensable injury or condition.
6. A return to the regular employment is expected to further aggravate or otherwise negatively affect the compensable injury or condition.
7. There is an existing or anticipated loss in pre-accident earning capacity by reason of the compensable injury or condition.
8. The worker requires supportive or social counselling services to optimize the likelihood of a timely return to employment.
9. The worker or employer requests assessment and/or intervention by a vocational rehabilitation professional.
10. It is clear that a return to the regular employment would result in exposure to a potentially hazardous work environment and it has been determined with reasonable certainty that there is a risk of recurrent injury or physical difficulties.

It is a function of the vocational rehabilitation professional to assess each claim and make a recommendation relative to the nature and extent of vocational rehabilitation assistance to be provided.

HIERARCHY OF OBJECTIVES (PLAN PRIORITIES)

When a claim is assigned to a vocational rehabilitation professional for assessment and intervention, there are certain vocational options which need to be exhausted in a sequential manner. These plan priorities have been established as follows:

1. Return to the same work with the same employer.
2. Return to the same work (modified) with the same employer.
3. Return to different work with the same employer.
4. Return to similar work with a different employer.
5. Return to different work with a different employer.
6. Retraining and re-education.

Intervention is ideally aimed at facilitating a return to employment with the pre-accident employer. A return to the pre-accident employer benefits the worker as he/she maintains any seniority, pension plans, and other company benefits. Further, the worker is returning to a familiar employment and social environment. It is advantageous to minimize the disruption to an individual's work life because it forms a significant portion of their self-image. The vocational rehabilitation process facilitates the return to work by bringing the worker and employer together, analyzing the job, identifying problems, modifications, and solutions, and initiating negotiations.

A return to the pre-accident employment benefits employers because they retain an individual who possesses knowledge and skills pertaining to his/her operation. There is no need to expend costs associated with replacing the worker; and simultaneously, having the costs associated with the rehabilitation of the worker assessed to the firm. The plan priorities may involve some form of retraining or re-education at any point in the hierarchy of objectives. For example, training (ie., at the work site or in a post-secondary institution) may be required to provide for a return to employment with the pre-accident employer.

The vocational rehabilitation professional offers services to the worker and employer which provide the opportunity for employability or employment while exhausting the least possible number of plan priorities.

INDIVIDUALIZED WRITTEN REHABILITATION PLANS

It is crucial that the worker and the Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant develop a plan of action in order to benefit from the vocational rehabilitation process. The Workers Compensation Board considers it critical that there be development of an individualized written rehabilitation plan for each case where intervention is required.

The Rehabilitation Plan is the document which outlines the specific vocational plan developed and agreed to by the Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant, the worker and where applicable, the employer (pre-accident or new). The Rehabilitation Plan describes the specific objectives and goal to

be pursued by the worker and the Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant. Further, the Rehabilitation Plan details the activities which will be undertaken to achieve the objectives and ultimate vocational goal.

It is of paramount importance that the worker and Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant, to the greatest extent possible, mutually agree to the plan and accept responsibility for its success. The employer must commit to the plan where it involves a return to employment with their firm.

When developing the Rehabilitation Plan, the worker and the Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant will:

1. Sequentially pursue the established hierarchy of objectives and document the outcome(s).
2. Define the overall vocational goal.
3. Describe the occupational group in which the worker can competitively pursue employment upon achievement of the vocational goal
4. Outline the supporting rationale which makes the vocational goal attainable (ie., existing or projected skills, abilities, interests, physical capacities, etc.).
5. Detail the specific objectives which must be met in order for the vocational goal to be attained.
6. Indicate the extent to which the worker will be employable once the vocational goal is achieved (ie., projected availability of employment and anticipated wage range).
7. Detail the methods, techniques, and supports which will be utilized to assist the worker in attaining a specific objective or the vocational goal. The provider of the service will be named.
8. Outline the benefits and/or allowances which will accompany the individualized written Rehabilitation Plan.
9. Indicate the time frames associated with the plan (ie., initiation and completion dates).

There must be commitment by all parties including the worker, employer (pre-accident or new) and the Workers Compensation Board to complete the plan.

When the Rehabilitation Plan is activated, it is understood that the worker is responsible for participating in the plan and making every effort to achieve the stated objectives. The worker should notify the Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant of any difficulties or circumstances which might impact on the successful completion of the plan. Where involved, the employer must make every effort to accommodate the worker. It is the responsibility of the Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant to provide the worker and employer with required services and reasonable supports to aid in the successful completion of the plan.

It is recognized that the Rehabilitation Plan may require revision due to unforeseen developments in the vocational rehabilitation process. Given that the Rehabilitation Plan sets out a goal and expectations, amendment of the plan will be acknowledged by the involved parties.

BENEFITS AND ALLOWANCES

In association with the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, the Workers Compensation Board will ensure that workers are provided with adequate income maintenance and allowances to allow for successful completion of an approved vocational rehabilitation plan.

Benefits

The Case Management Branch of the Workers Compensation Board is responsible for maintaining benefits during the course of a vocational rehabilitation program. Vocational rehabilitation benefits can be equivalent to those received by the injured worker during temporary, total disability or compensate for temporary or permanent loss in earning capacity.

When vocational rehabilitation benefits are being provided, Case Management will consider monies being received by the worker through other disability programs by reason of the compensable injury. It is considered that vocational rehabilitation benefits should augment employment and/or other monies being received by the worker as a consequence of the compensable injury or condition.

When the multi-disciplinary team approach is fully implemented, the adjudicator will retain responsibility for administering all benefits. Vocational rehabilitation professionals will focus on providing vocational rehabilitation services.

Allowances

The vocational rehabilitation professionals operating in the Case Management Branch are responsible for providing allowances to cover costs associated with a vocational rehabilitation program or the rehabilitative needs of the injured worker:

1. Tools and Equipment — As a rehabilitative measure, the cost of special equipment, tools, or clothing where this is necessary in facilitating re-employment.
2. Tuition, Books, Supplies, etc. — When a particular vocational rehabilitation plan involves academic or vocational training, the cost of tuition and required books or supplies may be provided.
3. Travel Expenses — Where participation in an activity related to vocational rehabilitation involves travel expenses in excess of those which existed prior to the compensable injury, allowances may be provided.
4. Relocation — Where temporary or permanent relocation is mutually agreed to and will enhance the prospects of reintegration, expenses related to relocation may be provided.
5. Residential and Vehicular Modifications — In order to facilitate independent living, costs associated with the modification of a residence or vehicle required by reason of the compensable injury/condition may be provided.

6. Clothing Allowance — A clothing allowance may be paid to compensate the worker for the additional deterioration of clothing caused by the wearing of a prosthetic or orthotic device.

7. Attendants' Allowance — This allowance may be provided where a severely disabled worker has expenses related to personal care. Attendants' allowance may be paid where the worker has extremely limited independence and requires assistance in meeting personal needs such as eating and hygiene.

DISCONTINUATION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

Naturally, vocational rehabilitation services can be declined, reduced, or discontinued within established guidelines as follows:

Benefits and services will be discontinued when the worker completes a vocational rehabilitation plan and/or returns to employment without a loss in earning capacity. This may also occur when:

1. The worker has recovered from the effects of the compensable injury or condition.
2. The worker is capable of returning to his/her regular employment notwithstanding any residual impairment or disability.
3. The worker chooses not to participate in a program of vocational rehabilitation.
4. The worker's pre-accident employment is unavailable for reasons other than the compensable condition and the worker is capable of having returned to that employment.
5. The worker chooses not to accept suitable/appropriate employment for reasons not related to the compensable injury or condition.
6. The worker discontinues suitable/appropriate employment for reasons not related to the compensable injury.

   NOTE: Employment would be considered suitable and appropriate where it is consistent with the worker's post-accident capabilities, skills, and interests, and provides the opportunity for maximum vocational rehabilitation in relation to the pre-accident status.

7. The worker is employable to a particular extent upon completion of the vocational rehabilitation plan.

In deciding whether and when to discontinue or reduce benefits and services, Case Management must carefully consider the individual circumstances of each case. It is the responsibility of Case Management to determine whether benefits and services should be discontinued or reduced, based on the level of employability expected upon completion of the vocational rehabilitation plan.

It is generally agreed that the conclusion of vocational rehabilitation services is a natural part of the vocational rehabilitation process. Where successful, vocational rehabilitation provides the worker

with the opportunity for a return to his/her pre-accident status and independence from the Workers Compensation Board.

DISPUTES AND APPEALS

While the vocational rehabilitation process is founded on the belief that vocational goals should be mutually established and agreed to, it is recognized that, on occasion, the worker or employer will disagree with a decision, determination, or request.

Where the worker/employer does not agree with an action taken by the vocational rehabilitation professional in whole or in part, either the worker or the employer may pursue his/her position or contention through the Workers Compensation Board's appeal process.

Ideally, the worker/employer and the vocational rehabilitation professional will discuss the item of concern and attempt to resolve the matter without need for a formal appeal.

Where the situation is not resolved through Case Management, the worker/employer has the option of pursuing the appeal through the Review Office and ultimately the Appeals Commission (final level of appeal).

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The Workers Compensation Board offers specific medical and vocational rehabilitation services to assist in assessment, plan development, and plan implementation. It is necessary to ensure that these techniques are efficient, effective, and legally or ethically appropriate (Emener et. al, 1981).

The Workers Compensation Board has established several programs related to vocational rehabilitation, all of which are comprised of specific services accessed either internally or externally. These are the 1) adjustment program, 2) assessment program, 3) employment program, 4) re-education, vocational, and academic training program, and 5) independent living program.

In providing services, internal and external resources will be used in a flexible manner. The program will access resources which best serve the needs of the worker and employer and can be provided in an effective and efficient manner. The Workers Compensation Board is establishing and redefining linkages with external resources so that external expertise is utilized where this best meets case management needs. The board will not duplicate relevant, quality services already available in the community.

ADJUSTMENT PROGRAM:

The adjustment program provides services that assist the worker to address personal, social, or emotional difficulties that result from the compensable injury and/or impact on recovery/ rehabilitation. Services offered in the adjustment program are intended to help the worker focus on and prepare for reintegration into the workforce. The counselling that occurs between the vocational rehabilitation professional and the worker should provide for preparation for re-employment and not personality reconstruction (Rubin & Roessler, 1983).

It is during activities undertaken in this program that the vocational rehabilitation professional and the worker develop an effective counselling relationship. This is necessary if the vocational rehabilitation professional and the worker are to mutually resolve personal adjustment problems which interfere with the establishment and achievement of a vocational goal. Ideally, adjustment counselling will be concurrent with vocational efforts.

Specific services available under the adjustment program include:

1) Social Counselling — These services can be provided or facilitated by the vocational rehabilitation professional when personal, emotional, or social difficulties arise which need to be addressed in order to allow for implementation of a vocational program. For example, social counselling services might be provided to assist to resolve marriage, family, alcohol, or substance difficulties.

2) Supportive Counselling — These services are provided when the worker requires assistance in coping with the difficulties typically associated with disability. Supportive counselling helps the worker deal with feelings of fear, anger, frustration, guilt, denial, and depression. As well, supportive counselling addresses self-esteem/image, attitudinal, and motivational factors. It is the aim of supportive counselling to promote acceptance and the development of adjustment strategies.

3) Financial Counselling — External service resources can be accessed where the worker is experiencing financial planning or budgeting problems that impact on the ability to maintain financial commitments.

4) Vocational Counselling — Through interview or clinical methods, this service is provided and/or facilitated by the vocational rehabilitation professional to help the worker explore and identify prospective vocational and employment options. Vocational counselling should clarify various factors (ie., life experience, values, expectations, needs, personality, interests, education, etc.) which need to be considered when establishing a vocational plan of action.

ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

The assessment program is used to evaluate or measure vocational functioning. The nature of the assessment program depends upon and flows from the results obtained under the adjustment program (ie., vocational counselling). Vocational evaluation is a comprehensive, systematic process which utilizes real or simulated work in assessing vocational potential (Pruitt, 1986). Vocational evaluation incorporates aptitude/interest/achievement tests or inventories, functional capacities assessments, medical assessments, job analysis, situational assessment, work site assessments, and other observational techniques.

1. Psychometric Tests/Inventories — These are formal or standardized instruments used to measure elements such as academic achievement, dexterity and co-ordination, specific or general vocational aptitudes, interests, learning styles, temperaments, etc. It is appropriate to differentiate between psychometric and psychological tests because psychological (ie., personality inventories) should always be administered/interpreted through a qualified Psychologist. Psychological tests or inventories involve a set of standardized or control stimuli designed to elicit a representative sample of behaviour.

    a) Vocational interest inventories provide an outline of what an individual wants to do, would be satisfied doing, and/or wishes to do. These type of inventories can stimulate career exploration by surveying aspirations, activities, occupations, and self-estimates of abilities.

    b) Vocational aptitude testing is intended to define an individual's ability to learn in terms of specific categories (ie., verbal reasoning, numerical ability, abstract reasoning, clerical speed and accuracy, mechanical reasoning, space relations, language usage, etc.). Vocational aptitude tests or inventories can assist in identifying an individual's capacity to acquire proficiency within a formal or informal training setting.

    c) Achievement tests involve measurement of an individual's current level of functioning under various categories (ie., mathematics, reading, language, etc.).

    d) Personality inventories are designed to measure personality traits relevant to the

functioning of the individual in a wide variety of situations (ie., employment, educational, organizational, inter-personal, etc.).

Depending upon the specific inventory, there may be identification of sources of personal strengths or self-defeating styles. Further, personality inventories may measure cognitive style, general levels of personal adequacy/adjustment, values, intellectual activity, etc., for the purposes of identification and prediction.

e) Intelligence tests are a measurement of an individual's capacity for intelligent behaviour and can be used as part of a cognitive, general psychological, or neuropsychological assessment.

These tests/inventories are used solely for the purpose of ensuring appropriate vocational planning and intervention.

2. Functional Capacities Evaluation — This is an evaluation of a worker's physical capabilities based on performance in a real or simulated work environment. The physical capacities evaluation should detail maximum weight capacities for lifting, pushing, pulling, limitations if any, in standing, sitting, kneeling, walking, reaching, and bending, overall musculoskeletal status and general conditioning level. This evaluation provides guidelines regarding a return to work and vocational planning. It can be adapted for the purposes of evaluating general capabilities or capabilities specific to an identified vocational option.

3. Medical Assessment — This service is utilized to identify work or functional capacities through evaluation by a qualified healthcare practitioner or facility.

4. Job Analysis — This service involves the objective analysis of the content of jobs and description of the jobs in a standardized and clear manner. Job analysis provides relevant information (ie., physical demands) to the worker, employer, and vocational rehabilitation professional. The matching of physical and non-physical factors to the prospective job is greatly facilitated by job analysis (Division of Occupational Analysis, U.S. Employment Service, Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labour, 1982).

In general, job analysis is the gathering, evaluating, and recording of accurate, objective and complete job data. Job analysis identifies and describes:

a) What the worker does in terms of activities or functions.

b) How the work is done in terms of the machines, equipment, tools, and work aids.

c) The results or outcome of the work performance.

d) The skills, abilities, and adaptabilities required to perform the job tasks.

e) The context of the work as related to environmental and organizational factors, including the extent of responsibility and accountability.

Job analysis is appropriate when examining the prospects of a return to a specific occupation/job or establishing a vocational plan.

5. Situational Assessment — This is a systematic method for observing, recording, and interpreting work behaviour (Pruitt, 1986). It is used to assess behaviour in a real or simulated work environment and determine the worker's level of vocational functioning. This can assist in developing remedial strategies where performance-related difficulties have surfaced. Situational assessment contrasts sharply from standardized testing alternatives in that it attempts to link the performance of the worker with the environments in which performance is required.

6. Work Samples — This involves having the worker perform actual portions or simulations of jobs utilizing the same materials, tools, and equipment used in the actual job. This service can be provided as a method of exploring vocational options before planning for or attempting to meet the full responsibilities of the position in a work environment.

It should be emphasized that many of the services provided under the assessment program require adequate observational skills on the part of the practitioner performing the evaluation. There is a need for objectivity in terms of perception, focus, and sensitivity to ensure that the interplay between the worker and the environment is accurately described and reported. External resources will be utilized for the purposes of evaluation where specialized skills are required and not accessible internally (eg., rehabilitation psychology, occupational therapy).

In summary, the assessment program is comprised of various evaluation services which allow for vocational planning on the basis of sound information/data regarding the worker's current or prospective functional capacities.

EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

Under the employment program, services are provided for the worker to prepare and compete for employment opportunities. These services are facilitated by the vocational rehabilitation professional.

The employment program is intended to assist the worker find a job. To that end, the Workers Compensation Board offers specialized employment services to the worker when his/her vocational plan reaches the point where re-employment is the focus.

The various services under the employment program may be facilitated by either the Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant, the Employment Specialist, or Adjudicator. It offers:

1. Individualized Job Seeking Skills/Techniques — This service provides the worker with skills to locate job openings, make formal applications, and participate in an employment interview. On a one-on-one basis, this service involves training in resume preparation, job interview methods, and counselling related to employment directions.

2. Job Finding Club — The club promotes systematic, specific activities intended to

maximize the worker's prospects of securing employment. The Job Finding Club typically provides services through a group setting and offers the following:

a) A Comprehensive Job Search Skills session which is three weeks in length and assists workers through instruction, practice and implementation of effective job search techniques.

b) An English for Job Finding Purposes (E.J.F.P.) session which is six weeks in length and designed for workers who have limited reading and writing skills in the English language. The content is similar to the basic three week JFC program except that it is more extensive as it increases the worker's verbal communication skills and does not involve exercises requiring significant reading or writing skills in English.

c) Follow-up Groups for workers who were unsuccessful in locating employment during the basic and E.J.F.P. sessions. These sessions assist workers by maintaining a focus on the active search for employment.

d) Specialty/remedial workshops which focus on making employer cold calls, completing application forms, specific interviewing skills, career exploration and job-seeking in rural locales.

e) Resume preparation.

3. Individualized Marketing Service — This service is provided to workers who present unique and extraordinary needs in terms of pursuing re-employment (ie., lack of communication skills, extreme lack of marketable skills, severe physical impairment/ disability, lack of success following extensive, standard intervention, etc.).

4. Worksite Modification — This service provides for modification of a work site/station, based on analysis of the environment, so that the worker can perform the job. Modification can address difficulties related to work posture, sitting, materials handling, use of tools, displays, controls, heat, lighting, noise, etc.

5. Work Experience — This service gives the worker the opportunity to develop skills which will be marketable to potential employers. Further, it enables the worker to regain basic employment readiness skills (ie., meeting regular responsibilities, functioning within a structured day, developing general work tolerances, etc.).

6. Work Assessment - This service is designed to assess the worker's capabilities to do a particular job, identify and eliminate any employment barriers prior to actual employment. Work assessment allows the worker and employer to evaluate the suitability of a particular position. This activity serves both an evaluation purpose (ie., situational assessment) and is usually a prerequisite to training on-the-job/employment.

7. Training On-The-Job — This service is designed to provide an individualized training program based on an agreement between the worker, employer, and vocational rehabilitation professional. Training on-the-job provides the worker with the opportunity

to acquire specific skills. Ideally, the worker is hired by the employer following successful completion of the training on-the-job. Training on-the-job services are usually offered when the basic skills can be learned in a relatively brief period of time. The nature and extent of training on-the-job is dependent upon the complexity of the task or set of tasks which must be learned by the individual.

When a worker is involved in the employment program, it is essential that he/she fully participate in all endeavours intended to promote employment or employability. The vocational rehabilitation professional will provide supports which enhance job seeking activities and ensure that services aimed at providing for employment are individualized on the basis of the particular client profile. As such, any requirement for activity on the part of the worker will be based on an assessment of the worker's unique capabilities and the specific vocational goal.

RE-EDUCATION, VOCATIONAL, AND ACADEMIC TRAINING PROGRAM

This describes all services and activities related to vocational plans where there is upgrading, vocational, or academic training under the auspices of an accepted or recognized facility or institution.

The vocational rehabilitation professional helps the worker to obtain information regarding programs available through universities, community colleges, adult education centres, and other accredited training facilities. The vocational rehabilitation professional also maintains regular contact and provides required supports during the re-education, vocational or academic program. For example, the vocational rehabilitation professional can facilitate tutorial services or enlist the assistance of a resource such as the Centre for Handicapped Students at Red River Community College.

The re-education, vocational and academic training program is usually offered when the plan priorities established under the hierarchy of objectives have been exhausted. This program is activated when it is reasonably clear that it will be a vocational benefit to the worker, is necessary to address the effects of the compensable injury in terms of the worker's level of employability, and will allow the worker to recover earning capacity to the greatest extent possible (ie., in comparison to the pre-accident earning capacity).

INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM

The independent living program covers services intended to promote, enhance and maintain the worker's non-occupational quality of life. Typically, services under this program are offered where a severe injury or condition exists.

The vocational rehabilitation professional can provide or facilitate services related to residential and vehicular modifications. As well, clothing and attendants' allowances are provided under this program.

The vocational rehabilitation professional will call upon external resources (ie., Canadian

Paraplegic Association, CNIB, etc.) for assistance in assessing independent living needs and implementing associated aids. The Workers Compensation Board is committed to providing workers who have become severely impaired with access to expertise in the community and subsequently a reasonable quality of life.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND PROGRAM EVALUATION AT THE WORKERS COMPENSATION BOARD OF MANITOBA

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Vocational rehabilitation formed a very small portion of the Workers Compensation Board's services to injured workers prior to 1982. In general, workers without a rateable impairment were not provided with vocational rehabilitation assistance before 1982.

Partially as a result of recommendations contained in major reviews of Workers Compensation Board operations in 1981, 1982 and 1984, the Workers Compensation Board adopted a much more expansive philosophy in giving access to vocational rehabilitation services. These changes brought the range of services more into line with rehabilitation services in other jurisdictions. As a result of these policy changes, the number of workers eligible for vocational rehabilitation services and the extent of services provided greatly expanded over a short time period. Significant increases in vocational rehabilitation costs were incurred as a result of the overall expansion. Expenditures for vocational rehabilitation increased from about $2 million in 1980 to slightly more than $13 million in 1988. After adjustment for inflation, costs in 1988 were about $8.6 million or 42 times higher than expenditures reported in 1980.

The most rapid increases in expenditures occurred during the 1981-84 period and can be attributed to program expansion due to board policy changes. Since 1985, inflation has been the significant factor in the increased costs of the program, accounting for approximately 46 per cent of the cumulative increase in expenditures. Lengthening of the rehabilitation process and the use of a more extensive range of services were other important factors.

The number of claimants receiving rehabilitation benefits roughly tripled from 794 in 1980 to more than 2,350 in 1988. Increases in the number of rehabilitation clients during the 1982-85 period were dramatic in view of declines in the number of reported accidents and time loss claims. The number of workers receiving rehabilitation continued to expand in the 1985-87 period; however, a slight decline in claims volume was recorded in 1988.

Through the period of the mid to late 80's, as the vocational rehabilitation program expanded, employers were expressing concern over rising costs and significant increases in assessment rates while workers were critical of delays in service and growing backlogs to enter the program.

It had become quite evident that the rapid growth of the program and cost escalation was occurring without a set of guiding principles, policies, and financial and management accountability.

Moreover, the content of the program was not communicated to the various publics, and its cost effectiveness was not disclosed.

CURRENT AND NEW INITIATIVES

In recognition of the growing costs and criticisms, the Workers Compensation Board determined that a major review and overhaul of vocational rehabilitation services would be required as part of the board's reorganization in 1989 and 1990.

To make the program more cost effective, to provide accountability to the constituent groups and to ensure value for dollars spent, several significant initiatives have been undertaken. These include:

1. DISCUSSION/POSITION PAPER

The development of a discussion paper on vocational rehabilitation was the basis for extensive consultation with the major constituent groups and other agencies and organizations who have a direct involvement with the program.

This paper served a valuable purpose in that for the first time the process had been documented and explained in length. The paper was the forerunner of the position paper, which in turn is the frame work document for development of appropriate policies and procedures. When developed and implemented, these policies and procedures will establish greater efficiency and allow the program to be more cost-effective. Policies for the program will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are current and meeting the objectives of the program.

2. CASELOAD PROFILE

Measuring success of the program is a priority. Standards by which success of the program can be measured must be reviewed continually so as to ensure programs are current and meeting needs and also to determine if new ones are required.

The Workers Compensation Board has undertaken development of a caseload profile which will assist in the evaluation of vocational rehabilitation services. The caseload profile will categorize caseload characteristics. This information will be used to identify 1) appropriate resource allocations 2) worker needs 3) staff development needs 4) program needs, and 5) future trends.

3. INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Detailed program evaluation will be feasible through an information systems project which will measure key variables such as 1) time between injury and VR intervention 2) duration and cost of VR involvement 3) types of VR intervention and 4) employment status at time of case closure and in subsequent years.

Development of an effective information system is essential in order to provide effective program monitoring on all aspects and accountability to the constituent groups.

4. DISABILITY PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

In January 1990 the first step towards the eventual implementation of a complete disability prevention and management program was introduced at the WCB. Initially, a selected number of firms and organizations whose costs and firm experience were above the average for their industry group, were approached to discuss the significance of their compensation costs in identifying problem areas. Once fully implemented, the objectives of this program will be to:

1) Establish a greater awareness of compensation, its importance, impact and implications.

2) Encourage firms with persistent (ie. over a 4 or 5 year period) high costs or loss ratios to review their prevention and safety practices and to engage external expertise, if required, to review and implement appropriate safety practices.

3) To look at development of modified work positions so as to get employees back into the work environment at an earlier time.

4) Encourage firms to maintain employment for their own workers.

5) Encourage firms to utilize the WCB's Employment Services Unit when hiring new staff.

6) Disseminate information on agencies, organizations (WS & H, Manitoba Safety Council) where firms may access information on how to address their safety practice.

This program is based on the premise that organizations can do much on their own to facilitate the appropriate return of injured workers to employment and to reduce their accident costs. These measures also reduce Workers Compensation Board costs including vocational rehabilitation expenditures.

SUMMARY

Appropriate measures are being and will be taken by the Workers Compensation Board as a result of the foregoing initiatives to make the program current, cost effective and accountable. These initiatives will not add further to the real cost of the program; but may well bring about reductions over time.

While the Workers Compensation Board is putting in appropriate mechanisms to be more accountable, there is also a need for industry and labour to work closer together to ensure that appropriate accident safety and prevention measures are developed and implemented.

CONCLUSION

It is the mandate and responsibility of the Workers Compensation Board to make available vocational rehabilitation services which provide the opportunity for reintegration of the worker while being accountable to all parties who have stake in the compensation system. The Workers Compensation Board is obligated to ensure that appropriate and cost-effective services are made available to all parties who are involved in vocational rehabilitation.

The Workers Compensation Board is committed to the development of policies and procedures which are consistent with the role and functions of vocational rehabilitation as stated in this document.

The Workers Compensation Board, through reorganization, has established service delivery units in which vocational rehabilitation can be pursued through multi-disciplinary teams. This will enable healthcare, vocational, adjudication and administrative support staff to develop strategies with the worker and employer which effectively address all aspects of rehabilitation. The Workers Compensation Board will ensure that vocational rehabilitation professionals have appropriate levels of authority for expenditure of monies required during the vocational rehabilitation process. Further, there will be reasonable quality assurance and development of innovative techniques and programs in support of the vocational rehabilitation functions within Case Management.

Through adherence to the principles and guidelines presented in this paper, evaluation of the vocational rehabilitation process should demonstrate that it is viable and can be administered in an efficient and effective manner. It is this goal towards which the Workers Compensation Board must strive. To this end, this paper aims to provide understanding and awareness of the role and functions so that all interested groups will commit to the advancement of the program.

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